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MAO TSE-TUNG

ON CONTRADICTION

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MAO TSE TUNG

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Written in August 1937, this philosophical essay, like the earlier one *On Practice*, aims at combating doctrinairism which was a serious problem in the Party. Originally delivered as a lecture at the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College in Yenan, it was revised by the author on its inclusion in his *Selected Works*.

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The law of contradiction, that is, the law of the unity of opposites in things, is the basic law in materialist dialectics. Lenin wrote: "In its proper meaning, dialectics is the study of the contradiction within the very essence of things."[1] This law has often been described by Lenin as the essence or kernel of dialectics.[2] Therefore, in studying this law, we cannot but touch upon a wide range of subjects and a great number of philosophical problems. If we get a clear notion of all these problems we shall have a fundamental understanding of materialist dialectics. The problems are: two kinds of world outlook, the universality of contradiction, the particularity of contradiction, the principal contradiction and the principal aspect of a contradiction, the identity and struggle of the aspects of a contradiction, the role of antagonism in contradiction.

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[1] Lenin, *Philosophical Notebooks*, Russian ed., Moscow, 1947, p. 237.

[2] In his essay "On Dialectics" Lenin said: "The division of the one and the cognition of its contradictory parts . . . is the *essence* . . . of dialectics." (*Selected Works*, Eng. ed., New York, 1943, Vol. XI, p. 81). He also said in his "Excerpts from Hegel's *Logic*": "In short, dialectics may be defined as the theory of the unity of opposites. This definition gets to the kernel of dialectics. but it needs explanation and development" (*Philosophical Notebooks*, Russian ed., Moscow, 1947, p. 194).

We have been keenly interested in the criticism in Soviet philosophical circles during recent years levelled against the idealism of the Deborin school. Deborin's idealism has exerted a very bad influence in the Chinese Communist Party, and we cannot deny that doctrinairism in our Party has affinities with this school. Our present philosophical studies should therefore aim primarily at eliminating doctrinairism.

I. TWO KINDS OF WORLD OUTLOOK

In the history of human knowledge, there have always been two different views on the laws of development of the world, two mutually opposed world outlooks: the metaphysical view and the dialectical view. Lenin said: "The two basic (or two possible? or two historically observable?) conceptions of development (evolution) are: development as decrease and increase, as repetition, *and* development as a unity of opposites (the division of the one into mutually exclusive opposites and their reciprocal relation)."[1] Here Lenin was referring to these two different kinds of world outlook.

In China as well as in Europe, metaphysics for a long historical period formed part of the idealist world outlook and occupied a dominant position in human thought. In the early days of the bourgeoisie in

[1] Lenin, "On Dialectics", *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., New York, 1943, Vol. XI, p. 82.

Europe, materialism was also metaphysical. The Marxist materialist-dialectical world outlook emerged because in many European countries social economy had entered the stage of highly developed capitalism, the productive forces, the class struggle, and the sciences had all advanced to a level unprecedented in history, and the industrial proletariat had become the greatest motive force in historical development. Then among the bourgeoisie, besides idealism which sheds all disguise and flaunts its extremely reactionary outlook, there also emerged vulgar evolutionism to oppose materialist dialectics.

The metaphysical world outlook or the world outlook of vulgar evolutionism consists in adopting an isolated, static, and one-sided view of the world. It regards all things in the world, their forms and their species, as for ever isolated from one another and for ever changeless. Whatever change there is can only be an increase or decrease in quantity or a change of place. Moreover, the cause of such an increase or decrease or change of place does not lie inside things, but outside them, and it is propulsion by external forces. Metaphysicians hold that all varieties of things in the world, as well as their characteristics, have remained unchanged ever since they came into being, and that any subsequent change is merely an increase or decrease in quantity. They contend that a thing can only be repeatedly reproduced as the selfsame thing for ever and cannot change into something different. In their eyes, capitalist exploitation, capitalist

competition, the individualistic ideology in capitalist society, and so on, can all be found in the slave society of antiquity, or even in primitive society, and will remain for ever unchanged. They trace social development to conditions external to society, such as geography and climate. They simply seek outside a thing for the cause of its development and deny the theory advanced by materialist dialectics that such development is caused by contradictions inside the thing. Consequently they can explain neither the variety of qualities of things, nor the change of one quality into another. In Europe, this way of thinking existed as mechanistic materialism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and as vulgar evolutionism at the turn of the nineteenth century. In China, the metaphysical way of thinking exemplified in the saying "Heaven changes not, and the Way too changes not"[1] was for a long time espoused by the decadent feudal ruling classes. Imported from Europe in the last hundred years, mechanistic materialism and vulgar evolutionism have been espoused by the bourgeoisie.

Contrary to the metaphysical world outlook, the materialist-dialectical world outlook advocates the study of the development of a thing from the inside, from its relationship to other things, or in other words teaches that the development of a thing should be

[1] A remark of Tung Chung-shu (179-104 B.C.), a well-known exponent of Confucianism in the Han dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220).

regarded as its internal and necessary self-movement, that a thing in its movement and the things round it should be regarded as interconnected and interacting upon each other. The basic cause of development of a thing is not external but internal and lies in its internal contradictions. Everything has its internal contradictions, hence its motion and development. Contradictions within a thing are the basic cause of its development, while its relationship with other things, their interconnection and interaction, is a secondary cause. Thus materialist dialectics effectively combats the theory of external causes, or of propulsion, advanced by metaphysical mechanistic materialism and vulgar evolutionism. It is evident that purely external causes can only lead to mechanical motion, that is, to changes in size and quantity, but cannot explain why things are qualitatively different in a thousand and one ways and why one thing changes into another.

As a matter of fact, even the mechanical motion of a thing under external propulsion is brought about also through its internal contradictions. Mere growth in plants and animals and their quantitative development are also chiefly caused by their internal contradictions.

Similarly, social development is chiefly due not to external but internal causes. Many countries exist under almost the same geographical and climatic conditions, yet they are vastly different and uneven in

their development. Tremendous social changes take place even in one and the same country while its geography and climate remain unchanged. Imperialist Russia changed into the socialist Soviet Union and feudal, insulated Japan changed into imperialist Japan, while their respective geography and climate remain unchanged. China, for long dominated by feudalism, has undergone great changes in the last hundred years and is now changing in the direction of a new China, liberated and free, yet her geography and climate remain as of old. Changes do take place in the geography and climate of the earth as a whole and in every part of it, but they are very insignificant when compared with changes in society; geographical changes manifest themselves in terms of tens of thousands of years, while social changes manifest themselves in thousands, hundreds or decades of years, or, in the case of revolution, even in a few years or months.

According to the viewpoint of materialist dialectics, changes in nature are chiefly due to the development of the internal contradictions in nature. Changes in society are chiefly due to the development of the internal contradictions in society, namely, the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, the contradiction between classes, and the contradiction between the old and the new; it is the development of these contradictions that impels society forward and causes the supersession of the old society by a new one.

Does materialist dialectics leave external causes out of account? Not at all. It considers external causes to be the condition of change and internal causes the basis of change, external causes taking effect through internal causes. At a suitable temperature an egg changes into a chicken, but no temperature can change a stone into a chicken, the two things being different in essence. There is a constant interaction between the peoples of different countries. In the era of capitalism, especially in the era of imperialism and the proletarian revolution, interaction and mutual stimulation, political, economic, and cultural, have profoundly affected various countries. The October Socialist Revolution ushered in a new epoch not only in Russian history but also in world history, exerting an influence on the internal changes in all countries of the world and, in a similar and yet particularly profound way, on the internal changes in China; such changes, however, occurred according to the inherent laws governing the development of China and all other countries.

Two armies engage in battle; one emerges the victor, the other the vanquished; the victory of the one and the defeat of the other are both determined by internal causes. One is victorious either because of its superior strength or because of its correct command; the other is defeated either because of its weakness or because of its incompetent command: external causes take effect through internal ones.

In 1927 the Chinese big bourgeoisie defeated the proletariat by taking advantage of the opportunism then existing within the Chinese proletariat itself (within the Chinese Communist Party). When we had eliminated opportunism, the Chinese revolution resumed its advance. Later, the Chinese revolution again suffered serious setbacks at the hands of the enemy, because adventurism appeared within our Party. When we had eliminated adventurism, our cause resumed its advance. Thus, to lead the revolution to victory, a political party must rely upon the correctness of its political line and solidity of its organization.

The dialectical world outlook had already emerged in ancient times both in China and in Europe. Ancient dialectics, however, had something spontaneous and naive about it; based upon the social and historical conditions then prevailing, it could not develop into an adequate theory to offer a comprehensive explanation of the world and was consequently supplanted by metaphysics. The famous German philosopher Hegel, who lived from the late eighteenth century to the early nineteenth century, made very important contributions to dialectics, but his dialectics was idealist. It was not until Marx and Engels, the great men of action in the proletarian movement, summed up the positive achievements in the history of human knowledge and, in particular, critically absorbed the rational elements in Hegelian dialectics, and created the great theory of dialectical and historical material-

ism that an unprecedented revolution took place in the history of human knowledge. This great theory has received further development at the hands of Lenin and Stalin. Once introduced into China, it immediately brought about tremendous changes in Chinese thought.

The dialectical world outlook teaches us primarily how to observe and analyse skilfully the movement of opposites in various things and, on the basis of such an analysis, to work out solutions of the contradictions. It is therefore of paramount importance for us to understand concretely the law of contradiction in things.

II. THE UNIVERSALITY OF CONTRADICTION

For convenience in exposition, I shall start with the universality of contradiction, and then proceed to the particularity of contradiction. The universality of contradiction can be briefly dealt with because the concept has been widely accepted ever since the great founders and continuators of Marxism — Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin — established the materialist-dialectical world outlook and achieved very great success in applying materialist dialectics to the analysis of many aspects of human history and natural history as well as in the transformation of many aspects of society and nature (for example, in the Soviet Union); but many comrades, especially the doctrinaires, are still not clear about the problem of the particularity of contradiction. They do not understand that the universality of con-

tradiction resides in the particularity of contradiction. Nor do they understand how important the study of the particularity of contradiction in things confronting us is in our guidance of the development of the revolutionary practice. Therefore, this problem calls for special attention and needs to be fully explained. Accordingly, in analysing the law of contradiction in things, we start with the universality of contradiction, then proceed with special care to the particularity of contradiction, and finally return to the universality of contradiction.

The universality or absoluteness of contradiction has a twofold meaning. One is that contradiction exists in the process of development of all things and the other is that in the process of development of each thing a movement of opposites exists from beginning to end.

Engels said: "Motion itself is a contradiction."[1] Lenin defined the law of the unity of opposites as "the recognition (discovery) of the contradictory, *mutually exclusive*, opposite tendencies in *all* phenomena and processes of nature (*including* mind and society)."[2] Are these views correct? Yes. The interdependence of the contradictory aspects of a thing and the struggle between them determine the life and impel the development of that thing. There is nothing that does not contain contradiction; without contradiction there would be no world.

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[1] Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Eng. ed., Moscow, 1947, p. 179.

[2] Lenin, "On Dialectics", *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., New York, 1943, Vol. XI, p. 81.

Contradiction is the basis of simple forms of motion (for instance, mechanical motion) and still more the basis of complex forms of motion.

Engels explained the universality of contradiction in these terms:

> . . . If simple mechanical change of place contains a contradiction, this is even more true of the higher forms of motion of matter, and especially of organic life and its development . . . life consists just precisely in this — that a living thing is at each moment itself and yet something else. Life is therefore also a contradiction which is present in things and processes themselves, and which constantly originates and solves itself; and as soon as the contradiction ceases, life too comes to an end and death steps in. We likewise saw that also in the sphere of thought we could not avoid contradictions, and that, for example, the contradiction between man's inherently unlimited faculty of knowledge and its actual realization in men who are limited by their external conditions and limited also in their intellectual faculties finds its solution in what is, for us at least, a practically endless succession of generations, in infinite progress.
>
> . . . One of the basic principles of higher mathematics is the contradiction. . . .
>
> But even lower mathematics teems with contradictions. . . .[1]

[1] Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Eng. ed., Moscow, 1947, pp. 180-181.

Lenin likewise explained the universality of contradiction as follows:

> In mathematics: + and —. Differential and integral.
>
> In mechanics: action and reaction.
>
> In physics: positive and negative electricity.
>
> In chemistry: the combination and dissociation of atoms.
>
> In social science: the class struggle.[1]

In war, offence and defence, advance and retreat, victory and defeat are all contradictions. The one cannot exist without the other. The two sides, at once in conflict and in combination with each other, constitute the totality of war, impelling its development, and solving its problems.

Every difference in man's concepts should be regarded as reflecting an objective contradiction. Objective contradictions, reflected in subjective thinking, set going the movement of opposites in concepts, impel the development of thinking, and ceaselessly solve the problems of thought.

Opposition and struggle between different ideas constantly occur within the Party, reflecting contradictions between classes and between the old and the new in society. If in the Party there were no contradictions and no ideological struggles to solve them, the life of the Party would come to an end.

[1] Lenin, "On Dialectics", *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., New York, 1943, Vol. XI, p. 81.

It is thus already clear that in simple as well as complex forms of motion, in objective as well as ideological phenomena, universally and in all processes, contradiction exists. But does contradiction also exist at the initial stage of every process? Is there a movement of opposites from beginning to end in the process of development of everything?

The Deborin school, so far as can be judged from the criticisms levelled against it in Soviet philosophical circles, contends that contradiction appears not when a process starts, but only when it has developed to a certain stage. Hence, up to that stage, the process develops not because of internal causes but because of external ones. Deborin thus returns to the metaphysical theory of external causes and of mechanism. Analysing concrete problems from this viewpoint, the Deborin school agrees entirely with Bukharin's view in seeing in the Soviet Union only differences but no contradictions between the kulaks and the peasants in general. In analysing the French Revolution it argues that before the Revolution there were only differences but no contradictions in the Third Estate composed of the workers, the peasants, and the bourgeoisie. These views are anti-Marxist. The Deborin school does not understand that there is a contradiction in every difference, that difference constitutes contradiction. Labour and capital have from the very beginning been in contradiction, though at first the contradiction was not very sharp. Even under the social conditions of the Soviet Union there is a dif-

ference between the workers and the peasants, and this difference constitutes a contradiction, though, unlike that between labour and capital, it will not become intensified into antagonism or assume the form of class struggle; the workers and the peasants form a firm alliance in the course of socialist construction and gradually solve the contradiction in the advance from socialism to communism. This is a question of difference in the character of contradictions, not a question of the presence or absence of contradictions. Contradiction is universal, absolute, existing in all processes of the development of things and running through all processes from beginning to end.

How does a new process begin? In this way: when the old unity and its constituent opposites yield place to a new unity and its constituent opposites, a new process begins to succeed the old. The old process is completed and the new one begins. The new process itself contains new contradictions, which now begin their own development.

Marx, as Lenin pointed out, gave in his *Capital* a model analysis of the movement of opposites which runs through the process of development of things from beginning to end. This is a method that must be employed in studying the development of all things. Lenin himself also employed it correctly and adhered to it in all his writings.

In his *Capital* Marx first analyses the simplest, most ordinary, fundamental, most common and

everyday *relation* of bourgeois (commodity) society, a relation that is encountered billions of times, *viz.*, the exchange of commodities. In this very simple phenomenon (in this "cell" of bourgeois society) analysis reveals *all* the contradictions (or the germs of *all* the contradictions) of modern society. The subsequent exposition shows us the development (*both* growth *and* movement) of these contradictions and of this society in the Σ [sum-total] of its individual parts, from its beginning to its end.

Lenin further remarked: "Such must also be the method of exposition (or study) of dialectics in general. . . ."[1]

Chinese Communists must learn this method before they can correctly analyse the past and present conditions of the Chinese revolution as well as foresee its future.

III. THE PARTICULARITY OF CONTRADICTION

As has been shown, the universality and absoluteness of contradiction means that contradiction exists in and runs through the whole process of development of all things. Let us now take up the particularity and relativity of contradiction.

This problem should be studied from several angles.

[1] Lenin, "On Dialectics", *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., New York, 1943, Vol. XI, pp. 82-83.

First, the contradiction in each form of motion of matter has its particularity. Our knowledge of matter is a knowledge of the forms of its motion, because there is nothing in the world except matter in motion and this motion must assume a certain form. In considering each form of motion, we must take into account the features common to all forms. But what is especially important and constitutes the basis of our knowledge is that we must take note of the distinguishing features, namely, the qualitative difference between one form of motion and other forms. Only when we have done this can we distinguish between things. Any form of motion contains within itself its own particular contradiction. This particular contradiction constitutes the particular quality which distinguishes one thing from all others. This is the internal cause or, as it may be called, the basis of the thousand and one ways in which things are different from one another. Many forms of motion exist in nature, mechanical movement, sound, light, heat, electricity, decomposition, combination, and so on. All these forms are interdependent and qualitatively different from each other. The particular quality of a form of motion is determined by the particular contradiction inherent in that form. This holds good not only with nature but also with society and with thinking. Every form of society, every way of thinking has its particular contradiction and particular quality.

Scientific studies are classified precisely on the basis of the particular contradictions inherent in their re-

spective subject matters. Thus a certain kind of contradiction peculiar to a certain field of phenomena constitutes the subject matter of a certain branch of science. For instance, positive numbers and negative numbers in mathematics; action and reaction in mechanics; positive and negative electricity in physics; decomposition and combination in chemistry; productive forces and relations of production, classes and class struggle in social science; offence and defence in military science; idealism and materialism, the metaphysical outlook and the dialectical outlook in philosophy, and so on — as all these contain each a particular contradiction and are each distinguished by particular qualities, they become the subjects of different branches of scientific study. Of course, without recognizing the universality of contradiction, we can in no way discover the universal cause or universal basis of the development and the movement of things; on the other hand, without studying the particularity of contradiction, we can in no way determine the particular qualities of a thing which are different from those of other things, discover the particular cause or particular basis of the development and the movement of things, distinguish one thing from another, or mark out the fields of scientific study.

The sequence in man's process of knowing always leads gradually from individual and specific things to things in general. Only after he has known the qualities peculiar to each of a great number of things can man proceed to generalizations and know the qualities

common to things. Having known such common qualities, he proceeds in the light of this knowledge to study various specific things which have not yet been studied or thoroughly studied, so as to find out their particular qualities; only thus can he supplement, enrich, and develop this knowledge and prevent it from becoming something dry and dead. These are the two processes of knowing: one proceeds from the particular to the general, and the other from the general to the particular. We acquire knowledge always by repeating these processes in a spiral fashion and, if we adhere to the scientific method, our knowledge becomes with each cycle more advanced and more profound.

Our doctrinaires err because they do not understand that, on the one hand, in order to know adequately the universality of contradiction or the common qualities of things, it is necessary to study the particularity of contradiction or the particular qualities of individual things and, on the other hand, once the common qualities of things are known, it is necessary to study those individual things which have not yet been thoroughly studied or have only newly emerged. Our doctrinaires are lazy; they refuse to make any painstaking study of specific things, but regard general truths as something emerging out of the void, and turn them into purely abstract and utterly incomprehensible formulae, thereby completely denying, as well as reversing, the normal sequence in which man comes to know truth. They do not understand the connec-

tion between the two processes in knowing, from the particular to the general and from the general to the particular — they do not understand the Marxist theory of knowledge at all.

In studying the form of motion of matter, we must examine not only the particular contradiction and the quality determined thereby in various complexes made up of a number of such forms, but also those in every single form at each stage of its long course of development. In all forms of motion, each process of development that is real and not imaginary is qualitatively different. In our study we must emphasize and start from this point.

Qualitatively different contradictions can only be solved by qualitatively different methods. For instance, the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is solved by socialist revolution; the contradiction between the broad masses of the people and the feudal system is solved by democratic revolution; the contradiction between colonies and imperialism is solved by national revolutionary war; the contradiction between the working class and the peasantry in socialist society is solved by collectivization and mechanization of agriculture; the contradiction within the Communist Party is solved by criticism and self-criticism; the contradiction between society and nature is solved by the development of the productive forces. Processes change: old processes and old contradictions disappear, new processes and new contradictions emerge, and the methods of solving contradictions dif-

fer accordingly. There is a basic difference between the contradiction solved by the February Revolution and the contradiction solved by the October Revolution in Russia, as well as between the methods used to solve them. The use of different methods to solve different contradictions is a principle to be strictly observed by Marxist-Leninists. The doctrinaires do not abide by this principle: ignorant of the differences between the various revolutionary situations, they do not understand that different methods should be used to solve different contradictions, but uniformly adopt what they imagine to be an unalterable formula and inflexibly apply it everywhere, a procedure which can only bring setbacks to the revolution or make a sorry mess of what could have been done well.

In our study we must bear in mind that in order to disclose the particularity of contradiction in its totality and the connection between its aspects in the process of development of things, that is, to disclose the nature of this process, we must disclose the particularity of each aspect of the contradiction in the process; otherwise it will become impossible to disclose the nature of the process.

A big thing or event contains many contradictions in the process of its development. For instance, in China's bourgeois-democratic revolution the situation is exceedingly complex since there are contradictions between the various oppressed classes in Chinese society and imperialism, between the broad masses of the people and feudalism, between the proletariat and

the bourgeoisie, between the peasantry together with the urban petty bourgeoisie on the one hand and the bourgeoisie on the other, between various reactionary ruling cliques and so on. Not only all these contradictions each have their own particularity and cannot be treated in the same way, but the two aspects of every contradiction also have each their own characteristics and cannot be treated in the same way. We who work for the cause of the Chinese revolution should not only understand the particularity of each contradiction in the light of its totality, that is, from the connection between its aspects, but also start with a study of each of these aspects, for only thus can we understand the totality. To understand each of the aspects of a contradiction means to understand the specific position each aspect occupies, the specific form in which it comes into interdependence as well as conflict with its opposite, and the specific means by which it struggles with its opposite when the two are interdependent and yet contradictory, as well as when the interdependence breaks up. To study these problems is a matter of the utmost importance. Lenin had this very idea in mind when he said that the most essential thing in Marxism, the living soul of Marxism, is the concrete analysis of concrete conditions.[1] In flagrant

[1] In his "Communism" Lenin said that the Hungarian Communist Bela Kun "gives up the most essential thing in Marxism, the living soul of Marxism: the concrete analysis of concrete conditions" (*Collected Works*, Russian ed., Moscow, 1950, Vol. XXXI, p. 143).

violation of Lenin's teaching, our doctrinaires never bother to analyse anything concretely, but indulge, in their articles and speeches, in pointless and empty talk very much in the manner of the "eight-legged essay",[1] thereby introducing into our Party a very bad style in work.

In studying a problem, we must guard against subjectivism, one-sidedness, and superficiality. Subjectivism consists in not looking at a problem objectively, that is, not looking at it from the materialist viewpoint. I have discussed this in my essay *On Practice.*

One-sidedness consists in not looking at a problem as a whole. For instance, understanding only China but not Japan, only the Communist Party but not the Kuomintang, only the proletariat but not the bourgeoisie, only the peasants but not the landlords, only the favourable but not the adverse conditions, only the past but not the future, only the parts but not the whole, only the defects but not the achievements, only the plaintiff but not the defendant, only underground revolutionary work but not open revolutionary work,

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[1] The prescribed form of essay in competitive examinations in feudal China from the 15th to the 19th century. It is made up of eight principal parts in addition to the exordium which includes the "presentation", "amplification" and "preliminary exposition" mentioned in the text. The eight parts which follow the exordium form four pairs of antitheses or "legs" or "limbs" and are the main body of the essay in which the theme is fully developed. The term has become in common parlance in China a byword for doctrinairism and clichés to denote their stereotyped formalism and triteness.

and so on. In a word, not understanding the characteristics of both aspects of a contradiction. This is called looking at a problem one-sidedly. Or it may be called seeing only the part but not the whole, seeing only the trees but not the wood. Consequently it is impossible to find the methods of solving contradictions, to accomplish the tasks of the revolution, to carry out assignments well, or to develop correctly the ideological struggle in the Party.

When, in discussing military science, Sun Wu Tse said: "Know the enemy and know yourself, and you can fight a hundred battles without disaster,"[1] he was referring to the two sides in a battle. Wei Cheng of the Tang dynasty also understood that one-sidedness is wrong when he said: "To hear both sides makes you enlightened, but to hear only one side makes you benighted."[2] Yet our comrades often tend to look at problems one-sidedly, and thus often run into trouble.

In *Water Margin*,[3] Sung Chiang attacked Chu Village on three occasions and was twice defeated because he had no clear knowledge of the conditions and used the wrong methods. He then changed his

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[1] Sun Wu Tse, or Sun Wu, a famous Chinese military scientist in the 5th century B.C. The quotation occurs in his *The Art of War*, ch. 3, sect. 20.

[2] Statesman and historian (580-643) of the Tang dynasty.

[3] A famous Chinese novel written in the 14th century about a peasant war in the Sung dynasty. Chu Village was in the vicinity of Liangshanpo, where Sung Chiang, leader of the peasant uprising and hero of the novel, established his base.

methods by first conducting an investigation into the situation with the result that he learned about the intertwining roads, succeeded in disrupting the alliance between the Li, Hu and Chu Villages, and won final victory in the third battle after secretly infiltrating his own soldiers in disguise into the enemy's camp, a stratagem similar to that of the Trojan horse. There are numerous examples of materialist dialectics in *Water Margin*, of which the episode of the three attacks on Chu Village is perhaps the best. Lenin said:

> . . . In order really to know an object we must embrace, study, all its sides, all connections and "mediation". We shall never achieve this completely, but the demand for all-sidedness is a safeguard against mistakes and rigidity. . . .[1]

We should bear these words in mind.

Superficiality is evinced when a person considers neither the characteristics of a contradiction as a whole nor those of each of its aspects, denies the necessity of deeply probing into and minutely studying the characteristics of the contradiction, but wants to set about solving the contradiction (to answer a question, to settle a dispute, to perform a task, or to direct a military operation) after only a cursory

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[1] Lenin, "Once Again on the Trade Unions, the Present Situation and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin" (*Selected Works*, Eng. ed., New York, 1943, Vol. IX, p. 66).

glance from a distance. Such practice never leads to anything but trouble.

Doctrinaires and empiricists in the Party have made mistakes because their way of looking at things is subjectivist, one-sided, and superficial. One-sidedness and superficiality are also subjectivist and lead to a subjectivist method because though all objective things are in reality interrelated and governed by inherent laws, they are not faithfully reflected as such in the minds of those who, in ignorance of the interrelationship and inherent laws, take only a one-sided and superficial view.

In the movement of opposites in the whole process of development of a thing, we must notice not only the special features of the interconnections and conditions of each aspect, but also the special features of every stage in the process of development.

The basic contradiction in the process of development of a thing, and the nature of the process determined by this basic contradiction, will not disappear until the process is completed; but the conditions at one stage of this long process often differ from those at another stage. This is because, although the character of the basic contradiction in the development of a thing or the nature of the process has not changed, yet at the various stages in the long process the basic contradiction assumes an increasingly intensified form. The process is marked by stages because among the numerous big and small contradictions determined or influenced by the basic contradiction, some become in-

tensified, others are temporarily or partially solved or mitigated, and new ones emerge. If we do not pay attention to the stages in the process of development of a thing, we cannot properly deal with its contradictions.

For instance, when capitalism developed from the stage of free competition to that of imperialism, the character of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie — the two classes in basic contradiction — and the capitalist nature of society remain unchanged; but the special stage of capitalism — imperialism — emerges because the contradiction between these two classes is intensified, the contradiction between monopoly and free competition emerges, the contradiction between metropolitan countries and their colonies is intensified, and the contradiction between the capitalist countries caused by their uneven development manifests itself in a particularly acute way. Leninism is called Marxism of the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution because Lenin and Stalin have correctly defined these contradictions and correctly formulated the theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution for their solution.

An examination of the process of China's bourgeois-democratic revolution, which began with the Revolution of 1911, also reveals several special stages. In particular, the period of the revolution under the leadership of the bourgeoisie and the period of the revolution under the leadership of the proletariat represent two vastly different historical stages. To be more specific, the leadership of the proletariat has

brought about a fundamental change in the whole aspect of the revolution, a new adjustment of class relations, a tremendous upsurge of the peasant revolution, an uncompromising revolution against imperialism and feudalism, the possibility of transition from democratic to socialist revolution, and so on. All these could not possibly have happened when the revolution was led by the bourgeoisie. Although the whole process underwent no change in the character of its basic contradiction or in its anti-imperialist, anti-feudal character as a democratic revolution — with the semi-colonial, semi-feudal nature as its opposite, yet it passed through several stages of development in the course of some twenty years, during which many important events took place, such as the failure of the Revolution of 1911 and the establishment of the regime of the Northern warlords, the formation of the national united front for the first time and the Revolution of 1924-27, the breaking up of the united front and the desertion of the bourgeoisie to the counter-revolutionary camp, the new wars between the warlords, the Agrarian Revolutionary War, the formation of the national united front for the second time and the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression. These stages contain such specific features as: the intensification of some contradictions — the Agrarian Revolutionary War and the Japanese invasion of the four north-eastern provinces; the partial or temporary solution of other contradictions—the elimination of the clique of Northern warlords and our confiscation of

the land of the landlords; and the reappearance of certain contradictions — the struggle between the new warlords and the landlords' re-seizure of the land after our loss of the revolutionary bases in the South.

To study the particularity of the contradiction at every stage in the process of development of a thing, we must not only observe it in the connection between its aspects and its totality, but must consider each aspect of the contradiction at each stage of development.

Take the Kuomintang and the Communist Party, for instance. When the united front was formed for the first time, the Kuomintang was revolutionary and vigorous and represented an alliance of various classes in the democratic revolution because it carried out Sun Yat-sen's three cardinal policies of alliance with Russia, co-operation with the Communists, and assistance to the workers and peasants. After 1927, however, it turned in the opposite direction and became the reactionary bloc of the landlords and the big bourgeoisie. After the Sian Incident in December 1936, it made another turn in the direction of the cessation of the civil war and an alliance with the Communist Party in a common fight against Japanese imperialism. Such are the characteristics of the Kuomintang in these three stages. These characteristics arise of course from various causes. In the period of the first united front, the Chinese Communist Party, a party in its infancy, courageously led the Revolution of 1924-27, but revealed signs of immaturity so far as

concerns its understanding of the nature, tasks and methods of the revolution, and consequently *Ch'en Tu-hsiu-ism* could, during the latter half of this period, assert itself and bring defeat to the revolution. After 1927 the Communist Party again courageously led the Agrarian Revolutionary War, creating the revolutionary army and revolutionary bases, but also committed adventurist mistakes which caused serious losses to both the army and the bases. Since 1935 it has corrected these mistakes and assumed leadership in the new anti-Japanese united front; this great struggle is now developing. The Communist Party is now a party that has stood the test of two revolutions and acquired a wealth of experience. Such are the characteristics of the Chinese Communist Party in these three stages. These characteristics also arise from various causes.

Without studying these characteristics we cannot understand the specific interrelations of the two parties at different stages of their development, namely the formation of the united front, the breaking up of the united front and the formation of another united front. What is even more fundamental is that in order to study the various characteristics of the two parties, we must study the class basis of both and the resultant contradictions between each of them and other forces during different periods. For instance, in the period of its first alliance with the Communist Party, the Kuomintang stood on the one hand in contradiction to foreign imperialism and was therefore

opposed to it, while on the other it stood in contradiction to the people at home and, in spite of its verbal promises to do many things in the interests of the working people, actually did little or nothing for them. In the period when it carried on the anti-Communist war, it collaborated with imperialism and feudalism to oppose the people, depriving them of all the benefits they had won in the revolution and so intensifying its own contradiction with them. In the present period of the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression, the Kuomintang, standing in contradiction to Japanese imperialism, wants to ally itself with the Communist Party without slackening its struggle against, and its oppression of, the Communist Party and the Chinese people. The Communist Party, standing always with the masses of the people against imperialism and feudalism, has in the present period of the War of Resistance to Japanese Aggression adopted a moderate policy towards the Kuomintang and the domestic feudal forces, because the Kuomintang has indicated its willingness to resist Japan.

These conditions have brought about at one time an alliance of the two parties, and at another time a struggle; and even during the period of alliance, there is also a complicated state of affairs in which alliance goes on side by side with struggle. If we do not study the characteristics of these aspects of the contradictions, we shall fail to understand not only the relation between each of the two parties and other forces, but also the interrelation of the two parties themselves.

It can thus be seen that in studying the specific nature of any contradiction — contradiction in each form of motion of matter, contradiction in each process of development of every form, each aspect of the contradiction in a process, and the contradiction and its aspects at each stage of a process — in studying the specific nature of all these contradictions we must in all cases make a concrete analysis and discard subjectivist arbitrariness. Otherwise there can be no knowledge of the specific nature of any contradiction. We must always bear in mind Lenin's words: the concrete analysis of concrete conditions.

Marx and Engels were the first to supply us an excellent model of such concrete analysis.

Applying the law of contradiction in the study of the process of social history, Marx and Engels saw contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production, contradiction between the exploiting classes and the exploited classes, as well as contradiction caused thereby between the economic base and its superstructure such as politics and ideology, and how these contradictions inevitably lead to different social revolutions in different class societies.

When Marx applied this law in the study of the economic structure of capitalist society, he saw that the basic contradiction of this society is the contradiction between the social character of production and the private character of ownership. This is revealed in the contradiction between the organized character of production in individual enterprises and the un-

organized character of production in society as a whole. In terms of class relationship, this contradiction takes the form of the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Since things are infinite in their variety and unlimited in their development, what is universal in one case becomes particular in another. Conversely, what is particular in one case becomes universal in another. The contradiction contained in the capitalist system between the socialization of production and the private ownership of the means of production is common to all countries where capitalism exists and develops; for capitalism this constitutes the universality of its contradiction. However, this contradiction exists only at a certain historical stage of class society in general, and constitutes only a particularity of the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production in such society. While showing by analysis the particularity of every contradiction in capitalist society, Marx expounded even more profoundly, more adequately, and more completely the universality of the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production in class society in general.

As the particular is connected with the universal, as not only the particularity but also the universality of contradiction is inherent in everything, and as universality resides in particularity, we should in studying an object try to discover both of them and their interconnection, to discover both particularity

and universality within the object as well as their interconnection, and to discover the interconnection of this object with the numerous other objects. When Stalin in his famous work, *The Foundations of Leninism,* explained the historical background of Leninism, he analysed the international situation in which Leninism was born, together with various contradictions in capitalism which had reached their height under the conditions of imperialism, and showed how these contradictions made the proletarian revolution a question for immediate action and how they created favourable conditions for a direct onslaught upon capitalism. In addition, he analysed the reasons why Russia became the cradle of Leninism, how tsarist Russia represented the focus of all the contradictions in imperialism, and why the Russian proletariat became the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat. In this way, Stalin analysed the universality of the contradiction in imperialism, showing how Leninism is Marxism of the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution, and analysed the particularity of the imperialism of tsarist Russia in the general contradiction of imperialism, showing how Russia became the home of the theory and tactics of the proletarian revolution and how in such a particularity is contained the universality of contradiction. This analysis made by Stalin serves as a model in our endeavour to understand the particularity and the universality of contradiction and their interconnection.

On the question of applying dialectics to the study of objective phenomena, Marx and Engels, as well as Lenin and Stalin, have always taught us that we must discard subjectivist arbitrariness and discover from the specific conditions inherent in the actual movements of objective things, the specific contradictions in those phenomena, the specific role of each of the aspects of a contradiction, and the specific interrelation of the contradictions. Failure to adopt this attitude in study is the reason why our doctrinaires are always making mistakes. We must take warning from their failure and endeavour to adopt this, the only correct attitude in study.

The relation between the universality and the particularity of contradiction is one between the common character and the individual character of contradictions. By the former we mean that contradictions exist in and run through all processes from beginning to end: contradictions are movements, things, processes and thoughts. To deny contradiction is to deny everything. This holds true at all times and in all countries without exception. Hence the common character, the absoluteness. But this common character is contained in all individual characters; without individual character there can be no common character. If all individual characters were removed, what common character would remain? Individual characters arise because each contradiction is a particular one. All individual characters exist conditionally and temporarily, hence they are relative.

This principle of common character and individual character, of absoluteness and relativity, is the quintessence of the problem of the contradiction in things; to fail to understand it is tantamount to abandoning dialectics.

IV. THE PRINCIPAL CONTRADICTION AND THE PRINCIPAL ASPECT OF A CONTRADICTION

As regards the particularity of contradiction, there are still two points which require special analysis, the principal contradiction and the principal aspect of a contradiction.

Many contradictions exist in the development of a complex thing; among these, one is necessarily the principal contradiction whose existence and growth determines or influences the existence and growth of the others.

For instance, in capitalist society, the two opposing forces, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, form the principal contradiction; the other contradictions such as those between the remnant feudal class and the bourgeoisie, the peasant petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie, the proletariat and the peasant petty bourgeoisie, the liberal bourgeoisie and the monopolistic bourgeoisie, bourgeois democracy and bourgeois fascism, the capitalist countries themselves, imperialism and the colonies, are all determined and influenced by this principal contradiction.

In semi-colonial countries like China, the relationship between the principal contradiction and non-principal contradictions presents a complicated problem.

When imperialism wages a war of aggression on such a country, the various classes in that country, except for a handful of traitors, can temporarily unite in a national anti-imperialist war. At such a time, the contradiction between imperialism and that country becomes the principal one, while all the contradictions among the various classes within that country — including the principal contradiction between the feudal system and the masses of the people — are relegated for the time being to a secondary or subordinate position. Such was the case in China in the Opium War of 1840, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894, the Boxer War of 1900, and is also the case in the present Sino-Japanese War.

In a different situation, however, contradictions change their relative positions. When imperialism carries on its oppression of the semi-colonial countries not by war, but in the milder forms, political, economic and cultural, the ruling classes in these countries will capitulate to imperialism; the two will form an alliance for the oppression of the masses of the people. Then the masses will often resort to civil war to oppose the alliance of imperialism and the feudal class, while imperialism will often, instead of taking direct action, employ indirect methods to help the reactionaries in these countries to oppress the people, and the internal

contradiction will thus become very much sharper. This happened in China in the Revolutionary War of 1911, the Revolutionary War of 1924-27, and the ten years' Agrarian Revolutionary War since 1927. The same may be said of the internecine wars of the reactionary ruling blocs in the semi-colonial countries, for instance, the wars between the warlords in China.

When foreign imperialists and their henchmen, the domestic reactionaries, find their very existence threatened by the development of the revolutionary civil war, the imperialists will adopt other methods to maintain their rule; they will either try to split the revolutionary front from within or directly send armed forces to help the domestic reactionaries. When this happens, foreign imperialists and domestic reactionaries will be openly and diametrically opposed to the broad masses of the people, thus giving rise to the principal contradiction which determines or influences the development of other contradictions. The aid given by various capitalist countries to the Russian reactionaries after the October Revolution is an example of armed intervention. Chiang Kai-shek's betrayal in 1927 is an example of splitting the revolutionary front.

But whatever happens, there can be no doubt at all that at every stage in the process of development, there is only one principal contradiction which plays the leading role.

Thus if in any process a number of contradictions exist, only one of them is the principal contradiction

playing the leading and decisive role while the rest are secondary or subordinate. So in studying any complicated process in which two or more contradictions exist, we must do our utmost to discover the principal contradiction. Once this is discovered, all problems can be readily solved. This is the method exemplified in Marx's study of capitalist society. In their study of imperialism and the general crisis of capitalism, and of Soviet economy, Lenin and Stalin also showed us the application of the same method. On the other hand, thousands of scholars and practical workers do not understand this method, with the result that, befogged by a mass of details, they cannot discover the heart of a problem nor the solution of the contradictions.

As we have said, we cannot treat all the contradictions in a process as being equal, but must distinguish between the principal and the secondary, and pay particular attention to grasping the principal. Now, in a given contradiction, whether principal or secondary, can we treat its two contradictory aspects as being equal? No. The development of the contradictory aspects in any contradiction is uneven. Sometimes there may appear to be a balance of forces, but that is only temporary and relative, while unevenness remains fundamental. Of the two contradictory aspects, one must be the principal and the other secondary. The principal aspect is that which plays the leading role in the contradiction. The nature of a

thing is mainly determined by the principal aspect of the contradiction which has become dominant.

But this situation is by no means static; the principal and non-principal aspects of a contradiction transform themselves into each other and the nature of a thing changes accordingly. In a certain process or at a certain stage in the development of a contradiction, the principal aspect is *A* and the non-principal aspect is *B*, but at another stage or in another process, the roles are reversed; this change is determined by the extent of the increase or decrease in the strength with which each of the two aspects struggles against the other in the development of a thing.

We often speak of "the old being superseded by the new". This is a universal and inviolable law. In this process, a thing, by different forms of leap, is transformed into something else according to its nature and the conditions surrounding it. Between the new and the old aspect of a thing there is a contradiction which gives rise to a series of intricate struggles. As a result, the new and minor aspect grows and becomes dominant while the old and major aspect dwindles and gradually approaches extinction. The moment the new aspect becomes dominant, the old thing changes qualitatively into the new thing. Thus the nature of a thing is mainly determined by the principal aspect of the contradiction that has become dominant. When the principal aspect of the contradiction which

has become dominant undergoes a change, the nature of a thing changes accordingly.

In capitalist society, capitalism has changed from a subordinate factor in the old era of feudal society into the dominant force, and the nature of society has also changed from feudal into capitalist. In the new era of capitalist society, for instance, in Britain and France, feudal forces, originally dominant, have become subordinate, and then gradually approach extinction. With the development of the productive forces, the bourgeoisie changes from being a new class playing a progressive role into an old class playing a reactionary role until, finally overthrown by the proletariat, it becomes a class which, deprived of its private means of production and shorn of its power, gradually approaches extinction. The proletariat, a much more numerous class which grows up simultaneously with the bourgeoisie but is under its rule, is a new force which, originally subordinate to the bourgeoisie, grows strong enough to be an independent class playing a leading role in history and finally seizes political power and becomes the ruling class. Then the old capitalist society changes into the new socialist society. This is the path which the Soviet Union has already traversed and all other countries are bound to traverse.

Take China, for instance. In the contradiction which makes China a semi-colony, imperialism occupies the principal position and oppresses the Chinese people, while China has changed from an independent

country into a semi-colony. But this state of affairs will inevitably change; in the struggle between the two sides, the strength of the Chinese people which grows under the leadership of the proletariat will inevitably turn China from a semi-colony into an independent country, whereas imperialism will be overthrown and the old China inevitably changed into a new China.

The change of the old China into a new China also involves a change in the situation between the old forces of feudalism and the new forces of the people. The old feudal landlord class will be overthrown, and from being the ruler it will become the ruled and gradually approach extinction. The people under the leadership of the proletariat will, from being the ruled, become the rulers. At the same time, the nature of Chinese society will change: the old, semi-colonial and semi-feudal society will change into a new, democratic society.

There were instances of such change of roles in the past. The Manchu dynasty which ruled China for nearly three hundred years was overthrown during the Revolution of 1911, when the Revolutionary League under Sun Yat-sen's leadership won a temporary victory. In the Revolutionary War of 1924–27, the revolutionary forces in the South as represented by the Communist-Kuomintang alliance, originally weak, grew strong and won victory in the Northern Expedition, while the clique of the Northern warlords, once all-powerful, was overthrown. In 1927, the people's

forces led by the Communist Party became very weak under the attacks of the Kuomintang reactionary forces but, with the elimination of opportunism within their ranks, gradually grew strong again. In the revolutionary bases under Communist leadership, the peasants, originally the ruled, have become the rulers, while the landlords have undergone a reverse process. It is always in this way that the new displaces the old in the world or the old is superseded by the new, that the old is scrapped for the new or the new emerges from the old.

At certain times in the revolutionary struggle, unfavourable circumstances outweigh the favourable, and consequently constitute the principal aspect of the contradiction. But when, through the efforts of revolutionaries, unfavourable circumstances are gradually overcome, the unfavourable situation yields place to the favourable. Such was the case after the failure of the revolution in China in 1927 and also during the Long March of the Chinese Red Army. In the present Sino-Japanese War China is again in an unfavourable situation; but we can change this state of affairs and bring about a fundamental change in the situation between China and Japan. Conversely, a favourable situation may also be turned into an unfavourable one if the revolutionaries commit mistakes. Thus the initial victory of the Revolution of 1924-27 turned into a defeat. The revolutionary bases that had grown in the southern provinces after 1927 all suffered defeat in 1934.

This contradiction also exists in the process of study when we pass from ignorance to knowledge. When we start to study Marxism, there is contradiction between our complete ignorance of or scanty acquaintance with Marxism and a knowledge of Marxism. But as a result of assiduous study, ignorance can be turned into knowledge, scanty acquaintance into considerable knowledge, and incompetence in the use of Marxism into a skilful application of it.

Some people think that this does not apply to certain contradictions. For instance, they think that the aspects do not change their respective positions in the contradiction between the productive forces (which are the principal aspect) and the relations of production, or in the contradiction between practice (which is the principal aspect) and theory, or in the contradiction between the economic base (which is the principal aspect) and the superstructure. This view is not dialectical materialism, but mechanistic materialism. True, the productive forces, practice, and the economic base generally manifest themselves in the principal and decisive role and anyone who denies this is not a materialist. But it must also be admitted that under certain conditions, such aspects as the relations of production, theory, and the superstructure in turn manifest themselves in the principal and decisive role. When the productive forces cannot be developed unless the relations of production are changed, the change in the relations of production plays the principal and decisive role. When, as Lenin put it, "Without a revolutionary theory, there

can be no revolutionary movement,"[1] the formulation and advocacy of the revolutionary theory plays the principal and decisive role. When a job has to be done but there is as yet no directive, method, plan or policy, then the principal and decisive role is filled by the defining of the directive, method, plan or policy. When the superstructure like politics, culture, and so on hinders the development of the economic base, political and cultural reforms become the principal and decisive factors. In saying this, are we running counter to materialism? No. The reason is that while we recognize that in the development of history as a whole it is material things that determine spiritual things and social existence that determines social consciousness, we also recognize and must recognize the reaction of spiritual things, that is, the reaction of social consciousness on social existence, of the superstructure on the economic base. Far from running counter to materialism, this is steering clear of mechanistic materialism and firmly upholding dialectical materialism.

If, in studying the particularity of contradiction, we neglect to study the conditions of the principal contradiction and the non-principal contradictions on the one hand and those of the principal and non-principal aspects of a contradiction on the other, that is, if we fail to study the distinctive character of these two kinds of conditions, we shall then get immersed in abstractions and fail to understand concretely the bear-

[1] Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* Eng. ed., Moscow, 1947, p. 35.

ings of contradictions with the result that we cannot find the correct method of solving them. The distinctive character or particularity of these two kinds of conditions represents the unevenness of the opposing forces. Nothing in the world develops with absolute evenness, and we must oppose the theory of even development or the theory of equilibrium. At the same time, the concrete bearings of a contradiction and the change in its principal and non-principal aspects in the process of development, show precisely the force of the new things superseding the old. All Communists should note that the study of various modes of unevenness in contradiction, of the principal and non-principal contradictions and of the principal and non-principal aspects of a contradiction, is an important method by which a revolutionary political party determines correctly its strategic and tactical directives in political and military affairs.

V. THE IDENTITY AND STRUGGLE OF THE ASPECTS OF A CONTRADICTION

Having understood the universality and particularity of contradiction, we must proceed to study the identity and struggle of the aspects of a contradiction.

Identity, unity, coincidence, interpermeation, interpenetration, interdependence, interconnection or cooperation — all these different terms mean the same thing and refer to the following two conditions: first,

each of the two aspects of a contradiction in the process of development requires the other aspect as the precondition of its own existence and both aspects coexist in an entity; second, each of the two contradictory aspects, according to given conditions, tends to transform itself into the other. This is what is meant by identity.

Lenin said:

> *Dialectics* is the theory which explains how *opposites* can be, and are (how they become) *identical* — under what conditions they are identical, transforming themselves into each other — why the human mind should not accept these opposites as dead, rigid things, but as living, fluid things, conditioned by circumstances, which transform themselves into each other.[1]

What is the meaning of this quotation from Lenin?

The contradictory aspects in every process exclude each other, struggle with each other, and are opposed to each other. Such contradictory aspects exist in the development of all things in the world and in man's thought without exception. A simple process has only one pair of opposites, while a complex process has more. Various pairs of opposites are in turn opposed to one another. In this way all things in the objective world and man's thought are formed and impelled to move.

[1] Lenin, "Excerpts from Hegel's *Logic*", *Philosophical Notebooks*, Russian ed., Moscow, 1947, p. 83.

Thus it appears that there is an utter lack of identity or unity. How then can we speak of identity or unity?

The fact is that a contradictory aspect cannot exist all by itself. If there is not the opposite aspect, each aspect loses the condition of its existence. Just imagine, can one of the aspects of a contradiction in things or in concepts exist apart from the other? Without life, there would be no death; without death, there would also be no life. Without above, there would be no below; without below, there would also be no above. Without misfortune, there would be no good fortune; without good fortune, there would also be no misfortune. Without facility, there would be no difficulty; without difficulty, there would also be no facility. Without landlords, there would be no tenant-peasants; without tenant-peasants, there would also be no landlords. Without the bourgeoisie, there would be no proletariat; without the proletariat, there would also be no bourgeoisie. Without imperialist oppression of the nations, there would be no colonies and semi-colonies; without colonies and semi-colonies, there would also be no imperialist oppression of the nations. All opposite elements are like this: Under certain conditions they are on the one hand opposed to each other and on the other hand interconnected, interpenetrated, interpermeated and interdependent; that is what we mean by identity. All contradictory aspects, under certain conditions, are characterized by non-identity, hence they are spoken of as contradictory. But they are also characterized

by identity, hence they are interconnected. This is what Lenin is referring to when he says that dialectics studies "how *opposites* can be . . . *identical*". How can they be identical? Because each forms the condition of the other's existence. This is the first meaning of identity.

But is it enough to say merely that the opposite aspects condition each other's existence, that is, their identity enables them to coexist in an entity? No. The matter does not end with their interdependence; what is more important is their transformation into each other. That is to say, each of the opposite aspects within a thing, under certain conditions, tends to transform itself into the other, to transfer itself to the position of its opposite. This is the second meaning of the identity of contradiction.

Why is there also identity? You know that by means of revolution, the proletariat, which was the ruled, becomes the ruler, while the erstwhile ruler, the bourgeoisie, becomes the ruled, changing place with its opposite. This has already taken place in the Soviet Union and will take place throughout the world. If there were no interconnection and identity of opposites under certain conditions, how, I should like to ask, could such a change have taken place?

Because of its inherent class nature and the temptations of imperialism (these being the conditions), the Kuomintang, which played a certain positive role at a certain stage in modern Chinese history, became a counter-revolutionary party after 1927; but, because

of the sharpened contradiction between China and Japan and the Communist Party's policy of the united front (these being the conditions), it has been compelled to agree to resist Japan. Contradictory things change into one another, and herein lies a certain identity.

The agrarian revolution we have carried out is already and will be a process in which the land-owning landlord class becomes a class deprived of its land, while the peasants, once deprived of their land, become small holders of land. The haves and the have-nots, gain and loss, are interconnected because of certain conditions; herein lies the identity of the two sides. Under socialism, the peasants' private ownership will in turn become communal ownership in socialist agriculture; this has already taken place in the Soviet Union and will take place throughout the world. Between private property and common property there is a bridge leading from the one to the other, which in philosophy is called identity, or transformation into each other, or interpermeation.

To consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat or the people's dictatorship is precisely to prepare the conditions for abolishing such a dictatorship and advancing to the higher stage of abolishing all state institutions. To establish and develop the Communist Party is precisely to prepare the conditions for abolishing the Communist Party and all party systems. To establish a revolutionary army under the leadership

of the Communist Party and to carry on revolutionary war is precisely to prepare the conditions for putting an end to war for ever. These contradictory things are at the same time complementary.

As everybody knows, war and peace transform themselves into each other. War is transformed into peace; for instance, the First World War was transformed into the post-war peace and the civil war in China has now also given place to internal peace. Peace is transformed into war; for instance, the Kuomintang-Communist co-operation of 1927 was transformed into war, and the peaceful world situation today may also be transformed into a second world war. Why? Because in a class society such contradictory things as war and peace are characterized by identity under certain conditions.

All contradictory things are interconnected, and they not only coexist in an entity under certain conditions, but also transform themselves into each other under certain conditions; this is the whole meaning of the identity of contradictions. This is exactly what Lenin meant when he discussed "how *opposites* . . . are (how they become) *identical* — under what conditions they are identical, transforming themselves into each other. . . ."

"Why the human mind should not accept these opposites as dead, rigid things, but as living, fluid things, conditioned by circumstances, which transform themselves into each other"? Because that is just

what objective things are. The unity or identity of the opposites in objective things is never dead or rigid, but living, fluid, temporary, relative, and conditioned by circumstances; all contradictory aspects transform themselves, under certain conditions, into their opposites. Reflected in human thought, this becomes the materialist-dialectical world outlook of Marxism. Only the reactionary ruling classes, past as well as present, and the metaphysicians in their service, do not regard opposites as living, fluid things, conditioned by circumstances, and transforming themselves into each other, but as dead and rigid things, and propagate this fallacy to delude the masses of the people, seeking thus to perpetuate their rule. The task of the Communists is precisely to expose such wrong reactionary and metaphysical ideas, to propagate the dialectics inherent in things, to hasten the transformation of things, and thus to achieve the aim of the revolution.

In saying that contradictions become identical under certain conditions we are referring to real and concrete contradictions, and also to real and concrete transformations of the contradictory aspects into each other. The innumerable transformations in mythology, for instance, K'uafu's racing with the sun in the *Book of Mountains and Seas*,[1] Yi's shooting down of nine

[1] Written during the era of the Warring States (403-221 B.C.). In one of the legends K'uafu is described as a superman who runs a race with the sun. Winning the race, he makes a tour in the sun but finally dies of thirst.

suns in *Huai Nan Tze*,[1] Sun Wu-k'ung's seventy-two metamorphoses in the *Pilgrimage to the West*,[2] the numerous episodes in the *Strange Tales from the Carefree Studio*[3] of ghosts and foxes metamorphosed into human beings — the transformations of opposites into each other as told in these legends are not actual transformations as manifested in actual contradictions, but are a sort of childish, imaginary, subjectively fancied transformations that are called forth in men's minds by the transformations of innumerable complicated, real contradictions into each other. Marx said: "All mythology masters and dominates and shapes the forces of nature in and through the imagination, hence it disappears as soon as man gains mastery over the forces of nature."[4] Although stories of endless metamorphoses in mythology or nursery tales can delight people because they imaginatively embody man's conquest of

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[1] Yi is one of the legendary heroes of ancient China, famous for his archery. According to a legend in *Huai Nan Tze*, compiled in the second century B.C., there were ten suns in the sky in the days of Emperor Yao. To put an end to the damage to vegetation caused by the scorching sunbeams, Yao ordered Yi to shoot the suns down. In another legend recorded by Wang Yi (second century A.D.), the archer is said to have shot down nine of the ten suns.

[2] A novel written in the sixteenth century. Sun Wu-k'ung, hero of the novel, is a brave and resourceful monkey. He has the mysterious power of changing himself at will into seventy-two forms, such as a bird, a tree, a stone, etc.

[3] A famous collection of 431 tales written by P'u Sung-ling in the seventeenth century.

[4] Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Eng. ed., Chicago, 1904, pp. 310-311.

the forces of nature and, moreover, the best mythology possesses, as Marx put it, "eternal charm," yet mythology is not based on the specific conditions of actual contradictions and therefore does not scientifically reflect reality. That is to say, in mythology or nursery tales the aspects that constitute contradiction have only a fancied identity, not a real one. Marxist dialectics is that which scientifically reflects the identity in actual changes.

Why can only an egg be transformed into a chicken but not a stone? Why is there identity between war and peace and none between war and a stone? Why can human beings give birth only to human beings but not to anything else? The reason is simply that identity of contradiction exists only under certain necessary conditions. Without such conditions there can be no identity whatever.

Why is it that in Russia the bourgeois-democratic revolution of February 1917 was directly linked to the proletarian-socialist revolution of October of the same year, while in France the bourgeois revolution was not directly linked to a socialist revolution, and the Paris Commune of 1871 ended in failure? Why is it, on the other hand, that nomadism in Mongolia and Central Asia has been directly linked to socialism? Why is it that the Chinese revolution can bypass a capitalist future and can be directly linked to socialism without traversing the old historical path of the Western countries, without passing through a period of bourgeois dictatorship? The answer lies entirely in the

actual conditions of the time. When certain necessary conditions are present, certain contradictions arise in the process of development of things and, what is more, these contradictions and others of the same kind are interdependent and transform themselves into each other; otherwise nothing is possible.

Such is the problem of identity. What then is struggle? What is the relation between identity and struggle?

Lenin said:

> The unity (coincidence, identity, resultant) of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute.[1]

What does this quotation from Lenin mean?

All processes have a beginning and an end and transform themselves into their opposites. The stability of all processes is relative, but the mutability manifested in the transformation of one process into another is absolute.

The movement of all things assumes two forms: relative rest and conspicuous change. Both forms are caused by the struggle of the opposites within a thing. When the movement assumes the first form, it only undergoes a quantitative but not a qualitative change and consequently appears in a state of

[1] Lenin, "On Dialectics", *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., New York, 1943, Vol. XI, p. 82.

seeming rest. When it assumes the second form, it has already reached a certain culminating point of the quantitative change of the first form, caused the dissolution of the entity, produced a qualitative change, and consequently appears as conspicuous change. Such unity, solidarity, amalgamation, harmony, balance, stalemate, deadlock, rest, stability, equilibrium, coagulation, attraction, as we see in daily life, are all appearances of things in the state of quantitative change. On the other hand, the dissolution of the entity, the breakdown of such solidarity, amalgamation, harmony, balance, stalemate, deadlock, rest, stability, equilibrium, coagulation and attraction, and the change into their opposites, are all appearances of things in the state of qualitative change during the transformation of one process into another. Things are constantly transforming themselves from the first into the second form, while the struggle within the contradictions exists in both forms and reaches its solution through the second form. We say therefore that the unity of opposites is conditional, temporary and relative, while the struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute.

When we said that because there is identity between two opposite things, the two can coexist in an entity and can also be transformed into each other, we were referring to conditionality, that is to say, under certain conditions things in contradiction can unite and can also transform themselves into one another, but

without such conditions, they cannot be in contradiction, nor can they coexist or transform themselves into one another. As the identity of contradiction obtains only under certain conditions, it is said to be conditional, relative. Let us add: the struggle within the contradiction runs throughout a process from beginning to end and causes one process to transform itself into another, and as this struggle is present everywhere, it is said to be unconditional, absolute.

Combination of conditional, relative identity with unconditional, absolute struggle constitutes the movement of opposites in all things.

We Chinese often say, "Things opposed to each other complement each other."[1] That is to say, there is identity of opposites. This remark is dialectical, and runs counter to metaphysics. To be "opposed to each other" means the mutual exclusion or struggle of the opposites. To "complement each other" means that under certain conditions the opposites unite and achieve identity. Struggle resides precisely in identity; without struggle there can be no identity.

In identity there is struggle, in particularity there is universality; in individual character there is common character. To quote Lenin, ". . . there is an absolute even *within* the relative."[2]

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[1] The quotation appeared first in the *History of the Earlier Han Dynasty* written by Pan Ku, a celebrated historian in the first century A.D., and has ever since been a popular saying.

[2] Lenin, "On Dialectics", *Selected Works*, Eng. ed., New York, 1943, Vol. XI, p. 82.

VI. THE ROLE OF ANTAGONISM IN CONTRADICTION

One of the questions concerning the struggle within the contradiction is: What is antagonism? Our answer is: antagonism is one form of struggle within the contradiction, but not the only form.

In human history, class antagonism exists as a particular manifestation of the struggle within the contradiction. Whether in slave, feudal or capitalist society, there is contradiction between the exploiting class and the exploited class and the two classes, which are in contradiction with each other, coexist for a long time in the same society, and struggle with each other; but it is not until this contradiction has developed to a certain stage that the two classes adopt the form of open antagonism which develops into revolution. The transformation of peace into war in a class society is also a case in point.

Before its explosion, a bomb is an entity in which contradictory things coexist because of certain conditions. The explosion takes place only when the new condition of ignition is present. An analogous situation exists in all natural phenomena when they finally assume the form of open clash to solve old contradictions and to produce new things.

It is very important to grasp this fact. It enables us to understand that in a class society revolutions and revolutionary wars are inevitable, that apart from them the leap in social development cannot be made,

the reactionary ruling classes cannot be overthrown, and the people cannot win political power. Communists must expose the deceitful propaganda of the reactionaries that social revolution is unnecessary and impossible, and firmly uphold the Marxist-Leninist theory of social revolution so as to enable the people to understand that social revolution is not only absolutely necessary but also entirely possible, and that this is a scientific truth already confirmed by the whole history of mankind and the triumph of the Soviet Union.

However, we must study the specific conditions of various kinds of struggle within the contradiction and should not inappropriately impose this formula on everything. Contradiction and struggle are universal, absolute, but the methods of solving them, that is, the forms of struggle, differ according to the nature of the contradictions. Some contradictions are characterized by open antagonism, others are not. Based on the specific development of things, some contradictions, originally not antagonistic, develop and become antagonistic, while others, originally antagonistic, develop and become non-antagonistic.

As we have pointed out, the contradiction between correct and incorrect ideas within the Communist Party reflects in the Party the class contradictions so long as classes exist. In the beginning, or with regard to certain issues, such a contradiction need not immediately manifest itself as antagonistic. But with the development of the class struggle, it can also develop and become antagonistic. The history of the Com-

munist Party of the Soviet Union shows us that the contradiction between the correct ideas of Lenin and Stalin and the incorrect ideas of Trotsky, Bukharin and others, was in the beginning not manifested in an antagonistic form, but subsequently developed into antagonism. A similar case occurred in the history of the Chinese Communist Party. The contradiction between the correct ideas of many of our comrades in the Party and the incorrect ideas of Ch'en Tu-hsiu, Chang Kuo-t'ao and others, was also in the beginning not manifested in an antagonistic form, but subsequently developed into antagonism. At present the contradiction between the correct ideas and the incorrect ideas in our Party is not manifested in an antagonistic form and, if comrades who have committed mistakes can correct them, it will not develop into antagonism. Therefore, the Party on the one hand must carry on a serious struggle against incorrect ideas, and on the other must give the comrades who have committed mistakes sufficient opportunity to become aware of them. Under such conditions, it is obviously wrong to push the struggle too far. But if those who have committed mistakes persist in and aggravate them, then the contradiction may possibly develop into antagonism.

Economically, in capitalist society where the town under bourgeois rule ruthlessly plunders the countryside and in the Kuomintang-controlled areas in China where the town under the rule of foreign imperialism and the native big comprador bourgeoisie most savagely

plunders the countryside, the contradiction between town and country is one of extreme antagonism. But in a socialist country and in our revolutionary bases, such an antagonistic contradiction changes into a non-antagonistic one, and will disappear in a communist society.

Lenin said: "Antagonism and contradiction are not in the least identical. Under socialism, the former will disappear while the latter will remain."[1] That is to say, antagonism is one form of struggle within the contradiction but not the only form, and cannot be applied as a universal formula.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

A few remarks by way of summing up.

The law of contradiction in things, that is, the law of the unity of opposites, is the basic law of nature and society and therefore also the fundamental law of thought. It is opposed to the metaphysical world outlook. It means a great revolution in the history of human knowledge.

According to dialectical materialism, contradiction exists in all processes of objective things and subjective thought and runs through all processes from beginning to end; this is the universality and absoluteness

[1] Lenin, "Remarks on N. I. Bukharin's *Economics of the Transitional Period*" (*Collected Works*, Russian ed., Moscow, 1931, Vol. XI, p. 357).

of contradiction. Contradictory things and each of their aspects have respectively their specific features; this is the particularity and relativity of contradiction. Contradictory things, according to specific conditions, are characterized by identity, and consequently can coexist in an entity and transform themselves each into its opposite; this again is the particularity and relativity of contradiction. But the struggle within the contradiction is ceaseless, and goes on when the opposites coexist as well as when they are transforming themselves into each other, especially in the latter case; this again is the universality and absoluteness of contradiction.

In order to avoid mistakes, we must, in studying the particularity and relativity of contradiction, endeavour to distinguish between the principal and the non-principal in contradictions as well as in contradictory aspects, and in studying the universality and the struggle of contradiction, to distinguish between various forms of struggle.

If, after study, we have really grasped the essentials mentioned above, we shall be able to smash those doctrinaire ideas which are opposed to the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism and detrimental to our revolutionary cause, and our experienced comrades will be able to systematize their experiences and arrive at certain principles, thereby avoiding the repetition of the mistakes of empiricism.

These are a few simple conclusions we have reached in the study of the law of contradiction